(2) DISTRIBUTION

Even in the sixth century B.C. the Jews were no longer limited to Palestine, but had spread into Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria. In 70 AJX, only one million still inhabited Palestine, as against **3-J** millions scattered mainly in the Near East and North Africa (Egypt, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Persia, Cyrenaica), and also Italy and Byzantium.

In the *Gist* one thousand years of the Christian Era, the Jews advanced from Northern Africa and Italy into Spain, Gaul, and Germany, and from Palestine and the Near East, by way of Byzantium, into the Balkan Peninsula and the Slav countries. But their centre, comprising the majority of the Jewish population, remained till about 1000 A.D. in the Near East. It is only in the eleventh century, with the concentration of the Jews in Spain, and the passing of the cultural predominance from the Babylonic to the Spanish Jews, that also numerically Europe gains in importance; at the time of the expulsion from Spain (1492) the 1-J million, which constituted world-Jewry, were about equally divided between the Near East and Europe, and this numerical distribution remained more or less unchanged till the end of the seventeenth century. When in the eighteenth century the stronger natural increase of the Jews in

Europe turned the balance in its favour, the Jews changed from an Oriental into a predominantly European nation.

The centre of gravity of ^European Jewry moved to Eastern Europe. In great masses they only came there when, after the Crusades, their position in Western and Central Europe had deteriorated, and they had been expelled from many countries. The Polish kings gladly received them, and granted them wide national autonomy and economic privileges. The Kingdom of Poland became the cultural and numerical centre of European Jewry.